

Pimp—"Black Capitalist"

Hank Malone

1969

a review of

Pimp, by Iceberg Slim, Holloway House Publishing Company, 1967, paperback, 95 cents.

This is the strangest bona fide bestseller ever published, appearing on no best-seller list; a kind of God-awful literary masterpiece and fluke, containing some of the lousiest writing ever conceived, and yet a kind of genuine article taking the reader along on one of the most disgusting American journeys to the end of Night.

Pimp is the diary/autobiography of a pimp; the lesson plan, the strategy, the dream, the story, the factual details, the ups and downs, the do-it-yourself kit, the peep-hole, the inside-dope, the map, the Bible, the Enticement and Warning of Apocalyptic Pimpdom.

Pimp tells you how to be a pimp. Pimp tells you about pimp success and pimp failure. Pimp is a fantasy. Pimp is the truth. Pimp is a lie. Pimp is an unbelievably good/bad book, only at your favorite dirty-book stores which is the reason why it's not on the best-seller list despite its astronomical underground sales during the last year.

The world of Iceberg Slim (he's the Che Guevara of the Black pimp world) is so remote, so acutely remote from the straight world of the American that a sizable Pimp-to-English glossary is provided at the end of the book to allow the voyeuristic straight reader (you & me) a kind of entrance into this world.

Pimp is the success/tragedy story of part of the American black ghetto. *Pimp* is a fundamentally allegorical expression of American capitalism. "My shoes would be hand made, would cost three times as much as the banker's shoes, but my shoes though perfectly fitted would be worn in tension and fear...You scurvy Bitch, if I shit in your face, you gotta love it and open your mouth wide."

Pimp is a story of slavery; a slavery of the black mind by the white world, a slavery of the whore by the pimp, a slavery of the white mind by the black whore, a slavery of frantic blacks and whites by the American dream, by the principle of

exploitation, by endless money, and heroin. "A pimp is the loneliest bastard on Earth. He's gotta know his whores. He can't let them know him. He's gotta be God all the way. The poor sonuvabitch has joined a hate club he can't quit. He can't do a turn around and be a whore himself in the whore boss's stable unless he was never a pimp in the first place."

No one knows if there really is an Iceberg Slim, and yet in the local black ghettos he has already become a legend to compete (tragically and pathetically) with the likes of Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver. "The best pimps," says Iceberg, "keep a steel lid on their emotions."

Every poverty-stricken black adolescent in Detroit knows Iceberg Slim, the nickname runs rampant up 12th Street and down Mack Avenue. Iceberg Slim is the coming black capitalist of the Nixon administration. "I would see myself gigantic and powerful like God Almighty. My clothes would glow. My underwear would be rainbow-hued silk petting my skin. My suits were spun gold shot through with precious stones. My shoes would be dazzling silver. The toes were as sharp as daggers. Beautiful whores with piteous eyes groveled at my feet." Yeah, go Nixon, go Iceberg!

To be a pimp is one of the important escape-fantasies of the poor black adolescent brought down by the white world. Dangerous beyond belief in reality, overweight with sadism, and masochism, pimping is seen by many black adolescents as a glorious escape-hatch out of the high-walled white world where the black man shines shoes, picks up dirty dishes, empties bed-pans, carries suitcases, or burns up in the heat of a foundry. "Yeah, my Black whore was a cinch to get piles of white scratch from that forbidden white world...I'm going to pimp or die. I'm not going to be a flunky in this white man's world."

The grotesque capitalism practiced by the pimp is perhaps the most important ideological stumbling block to the growth of Black Power in the American ghetto. As long as the pimp-myth exerts its "heroic" magic upon black adolescents searching for a life-style to combat the crazy White World, as long as the pimp wins-out over men like Malcolm X in the minds of some black youth, the black community will continue to suffer the consequences of the hateful adoration of the white man's American Dream.

The pimp is truly a white man in black-face. He's also the black counter-revolutionary. "My hope to be important and admired could be realized even behind this black stockade. It was simple, just pimp my ass off and get a ton of scratch. Everybody in both worlds kissed your ass black and blue if you had flash and front."

Few people in the White World realize the importance of Black Power as an existential and ideological alternative to the mythic life-style of the pimp. The nightmare world described brilliantly, if awkwardly, by Iceberg Slim is ample evidence of how very important Black Power must become if it is to unseat the heroic legend of the most vicious, exploitative Black/White man alive: the black capitalist, the Pimp.

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